

WEST KOKSHAAL-TAU

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Es Tressider



Alpinist B-Team recipient Es Tressider contemplating the crux pitch of Haggis Supper (WI5+, 500m) on the south face of Panfilovski Division (ca. 5400m), West Kokshall-Tau, Kyrgyzstan. Tressider and his teammates established four new routes in the area, including the first ascent of the Great Walls of China. [Photo] Pete Benson

Guy Robertson, Pete Benson, Robin Thomas, Matt Halls and I traveled to the West Kokshaal-Tau in late August. Guy, Pete and I planned to tackle the southeast face of Kyzyl Asker (5842m), which Guy and I had tried in 2002. The problem then had been that the line thawed at the slightest hint of sunshine. Although it was colder this time around, thawing still proved to be a significant problem, and we left without having attempted it. Instead our team added four new routes to the surrounding walls, and a new route on Kyzyl Asker for the second ascent of the mountain.

Early in the trip, Guy, Pete and I climbed a new route on the south face of Panfilovski Division (ca. 5400m). After four fine technical pitches of pure ice and mixed climbing, accomplished in bad weather and continuous spindrift, we simul-climbed some moderate

but insecure ground. Next, we reached easy terrain approximately 200 meters below the summit. From here we descended a broad gully on Abalakov threads. We named the route Haggis Supper (WI5+, 500m).

The weather cleared for five days. Matt and Robin added a new gully line to the south face of Pik Jerry Garcia (ca. 5200M), climbing the crux ice before the sun hit.

Guy and I then made the first ascent of the Great Walls of China via a superbly sustained, icy mixed line, Border Control (WI5 Scottish VII/VIII A1), that provided thirteen long pitches, only three of which were easier than Scottish V (WI4). The crux pitches involved thin ice, with some rock climbing on the more discontinuous sections.

While we were recovering, Pete and Matt made the second ascent of Kyzyl Asker. They avoided the problematic seracs on the north face by traversing above them from the east col, which they gained via a gully from the south (one pitch of Scottish VI). Once on the face the terrain was easier-indeed, they skied much of it!

Last up, Pete and I added a route to the Ochre Walls, climbing an obvious ice smear to the left of Beefcake (IV M5 WI4, 600m, Isaac-Decapio, 2001). Fire and Ice (ED: Scottish VII, 500m) offered superb icy mixed climbing on a bitterly cold day. We reached the unnamed summit at dusk.

It would seem that late August/September offers the best chance for stable weather in this region. In July/August 2002, our two teams made four attempts on routes. This year, the weather allowed us to make eight.